

THE BIBLE FRAUD

The Church went out of its way to suppress the knowledge that Jesus had an identical twin brother, Judas Thomas, and that their father was Tiberius, who later became Emperor of Rome.

Part 2 of 3

by Tony Bushby © 2001

Extracted from chapters 2 and 3
of his book

The Bible Fraud

Published in 2001 by
The Pacific Blue Group Inc., Hong Kong

Website: www.thebiblefraud.com

THE ROMAN FATHER OF THE TWINS

As with ancient Hebrew, Christian and Jewish names, it is also difficult to be exactly sure of the real names of many of the Roman characters with which we are dealing and many irregularities arise. The allocation of names was unlike today's Western procedure, and a great many were purposely compounded with the names of Caesars, deities and hybrid variations such as Caracalla, Emperor of Rome, AD 211–217. "Caracalla" was a name derived from a long tunic worn by the Gauls, which he adopted as his favourite dress after he became Emperor. His proper name was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

The name Caesar developed from "caesarian", being the nature of the birth of Julius Caesar. Sometimes a new name was afterwards substituted for the original one, just as Plato was originally called Aristocles. The Jewish name of the first-century historian Joseph ben Matthias became Titus Flavius Josephus when he took Roman citizenship late in life.

A popular loan-name among Roman men was Silvanus,³⁹ which developed from the Roman god of "uncultivated land beyond the boundaries of tillage". A man with the name of Silvanus was depicted as "uncanny and dangerous". In many cases the name was not given until the person was grown up, and it was then adapted from personal qualities, such as Modestus, Servus ("from a servile condition"), or the name of an historical celebrity, Cornelia being one instance. In another Roman tradition, the name was sometimes a reference to peculiar circumstances at birth, e.g., Lucius, born by day; Manius, born in the morning; Alphus, the first born; Quintus, the fifth born; and Decimus, the tenth born. As a rule, the eldest received the praenomen (Christian name) of his father, and this helps to determine exactly who Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera, as it appears on the headstone at Bingerbrück in Germany, really was.

The name Tiberius Julius is the first part of the full name of Tiberius, Emperor of Rome,⁴⁰ the adopted son and heir of Emperor Augustus. Whether Tiberius was a native of Sidon in Phoenicia, as recorded on the headstone, is difficult to establish for there are conflicting references to his birthplace. When he was very young, Tiberius' parents were in fear of their lives through the uncertainty of the civil war, where wrong political allegiances could result in early death.

His childhood and youth were beset with hardships and difficulties, because Claudius Nero and Livia [his parents] took him wherever they went in their flight from Octavius... He was next hurried all over Sicily... His parents finally fled to Greece but were still in pursuit...escaping with him from Sparta at night.⁴¹

The *Monumentum Ancyranum*⁴² reports that at one stage the family sailed from Phoenicia to Egypt to avoid persecution. With such persistent pursuers it was probable that the family lived at Sidon in Phoenicia and left when they were found, but this information was not publicly recorded.

The words that are important in establishing whether or not the headstone actually referred to Emperor Tiberius are "Panthera" and "Abdes". In order to understand this inscription, it shall be shown that the headstone was composed well after the time of the events in question and therefore benefited from the hindsight of history. There appeared to be a very deliberate plan in place in the manufacture of this headstone, and whoever was responsible for its construction knew the essence of what is revealed in this book. Its unknown creator encoded vital information in the form of a cipher and anagram, which

when decoded revealed the identity of the father of Mariamne Herod's twin boys.

In many cases a name was a reflection of that person's character, and that view of ancient understanding can be used to trace an individual's life and illuminate that person's intimate character peculiarities. That was the case with Tiberius Julius' nickname, Panther. Variations were Panter, Panetier, Panterer (Roman), which all meant "adulterer"⁴³ and Tiberius was a man noted for his sexual excesses. This was an indication of how historical characters received their confusing multiplicity of names, for their names came to reflect their nature and the events that surrounded their lives.

Not even Tiberius' friends would deny that he often committed adultery, but said in justification that he did so for reasons of state, not simple passion: he wanted to discover what his enemies were doing by becoming intimate with their wives or daughters.⁴⁴ The reputation of being a womaniser stuck to Tiberius, and as an elderly man he was said to have still harboured "a passion for deflowering girls, indulging in his sensual propensities on the island of Capri". The name of Panther may have originally developed from a little-known ancient Roman city of debauchery called Pantherin or Pantherine. "Panther" may have also been attached to Tiberius Julius because of his beastly nature for the cat-like tactics he used in stalking and pouncing on his opponents in wars against the Dalmatians and Pannonians.

*In the old Physiologus [an anonymous second-century book of 50 allegories], the panther was the type of Christ, but later, when the savage nature of the beast became more widely known, it became symbolical of evil and hypocritical flattery.*⁴⁵

From the year of his adoption by Augustus, circa AD 4, to the death of that Emperor, Tiberius was in command of the Roman armies and because of his wicked nature his troops named him "the savage beast".⁴⁶ Modern historians describe him as a bloody tyrant.

There may be another clue in the name "Panther" associated with the lusty, untamed, horned Greek god Pan, who amused himself with the chase of nymphs. He was forever in love with one nymph or another, but always rejected because of his foul nature. Pan dwelt in forests and was dreaded by those whose occupations caused them to pass through the woods by day or night. Hence sudden fright without any visible cause was ascribed to Pan and called a "panic" terror. This blackened his image so that he was seen to correspond to the Devil himself. The name "Pan" may have originally developed from the earlier Greek myth of Pandarus, the term meaning "he who shoots an arrow". Pan was the bowman (archer) of the zodiac, which is also the sign of Sagittarius, encompassing parts of the months of November and December, and it was no surprise to find that Tiberius, an archer in his youth,⁴⁷ was born in November. There does seem to be some historical doubt as to accuracy of the time and place of his birth, and this may account for the modern birth date given to him—16 November⁴⁸—falling slightly outside the prescribed range of the current Sagittarius dates, 26 November to 23 December.

It should be recognised, however, that the calendar has been adjusted over the course of 2,000 years. Some time shortly before

the 17th century, the Latin Sacred College quietly restored fifteen years to the Roman calendar. The net result of that and earlier alterations shows a present difference between Oriental and Western chronologies of sixty-three years when both are compared from any certainly known astronomical date—for example, Halley's comet.

The Roman leaders were renowned for their personification of earlier gods, and the story of Julius Caesar acting out the role as Zeus was well recorded.

*Then there was Augustus' private banquet, known as "The Feast of the Divine Twelve", which caused a public scandal. The guests came dressed as gods or goddesses, Augustus himself representing Apollo.*⁴⁹

Apollo was the son of Zeus, who was the equivalent to Jupiter in the Roman pantheon, with the "Divine Twelve" representing the gods of the zodiac. Zeus was also the father of Hermes and Pan was Hermes' son. The great importance of the gods in Roman history at the time was seen when Emperor Augustus enlarged the temple of Apollo near Nicopolis, built in recognition of the victory at Actium.⁵⁰ This was the victory over Mark Antony that cleared the way for his imperial dictatorship.

Abdes was the third name found on the tombstone and applied to Tiberius Julius Panthera. The origin of Abdes may be connected with Emperor Augustus' liking for ciphers, and this may be what the originator of the tombstone was alluding to when he applied it to Tiberius. It was said of Emperor Augustus that:

*Instead of paying strict regard to orthography, as formulated by the grammarians, he inclined towards phonetic spelling... When Augustus wrote in cipher he simply substituted the next letter of the alphabet for the one required, except that he wrote AA for X.*⁵¹

"Abdes" was the third name found on the tombstone and applied to Tiberius Julius Panthera.

By applying both of these rules to the word "Abdes" on the German headstone, a hidden code is thus revealed:

Abdes = Ab-des = Bc-des = BC days

(Note: The extra twist for the reader is to apply the cipher rule forward as the person creating it, not backwards as would have been the case to decipher.)

The person or persons who created the headstone cipher could have only done so after the sixth century when the Julian calendar was instituted.

The proposed suggestion is that the cipher was designed to draw attention to the fact that circumstances surrounding the fathering and birth of Mariamne Herod's twin boys occurred in BC rather than AD. Presumably the inscription on the tombstone was placed there to convey a special message, for it is unlikely to have been put there 600 years or more after the actual event to honour the site of an actual body, if there ever was a body buried at the site.

The inscription stated that Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera was transferred to service in the Rhineland (Germany) in the year AD 9. The young Tiberius was indeed in that area at that time.

Tiberius was given another three years of tribunicial power, with the task of pacifying Germany... There followed the

*Illyrian revolt, which he was sent to suppress... Tiberius conducted it for three years...but, though often called back to Rome... Tiberius was well paid for his stubbornness, by finally reducing the whole of Illyricum—an enormous stretch of country enclosed by northern Italy, Noricum, the Danube, Thrace, Macedonia and the Adriatic Sea—to complete submission.*⁵²

This timely victory prevented the victorious Germans, who had defeated three legions of Rome under Varus in AD 9, from linking up with the Pannonians.

*Proposals were made for decreeing him [Tiberius] the surname "Pannonicus", or "the Unconquered" or "the Devoted"; but Emperor Augustus vetoed all these in turn, promising on each occasion that Tiberius would be satisfied with that of "Augustus", which he intended to bequeath him.*⁵³

The evidence is compelling in locating Tiberius for service in the area of the Rhineland in AD 9. However, to switch the era from AD to BC as the Abdes cipher suggests, the person named on the headstone was in the Rhineland in 9 BC, not AD, and Tiberius was located there on active duty at that time also. Suetonius recorded that "in the third [instance] he

took some 40,000 German prisoners, whom he brought across the Rhine and settled in new homes on the Gallic bank",⁵⁴ the years verified as 7 and 9 BC. Although Tiberius was on active duty in that area at that time, "he visited Rome several times".⁵⁵

The date, nevertheless, is curious for locating the tombstone at Bingerbrück at all, because it does not say that Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera died and was buried there; only that he was on service in the Rhineland. The evidence of the assertion supposes that this time of 9 BC is a coded message revealing the year the twin boys were born to Mariamne Herod. At that time, she would have been fifteen years of age.

The territory known as Germany today was never identified with this title until at least the time of Napoleon, when the Confederation of the Rhine was formed in July 1806. From that time on, the area began to be called Rhineland. This knowledge brings the placing of the tombstone forward some 1,200 additional years from the first-century designation and nearly 1,800 years after the death of Tiberius.

On further examination, a remarkable materialisation of information appeared, for on a modern map of Germany we find that Bingerbrück is located on the Rhine River in the Rhineland Palatinate, a district of southwest Germany west of the Rhine, which belonged to Bavaria until 1945. Formerly, portions of the neighbouring territory (Upper Palatinate) constituted an electorate of the Holy Roman Empire, now part of the Rhineland Palatinate State. The Latin-derived word Palatinate was a different sense of the word Palatine, whereas the

Latin *Palatinus* meant "of the Imperial House" and the electorate indicated the state contained one of the German princes entitled to elect the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.⁵⁶

Palatine is one of the Seven Hills of Rome and was where the Emperor of the Roman Empire resided in the Imperial House—succeeded by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire who now resides in the Vatican. The interesting matter is that in earlier times there was built on the Palatine hill a shrine to "The Heavenly Twins", and it remains there to this day.

Conclusion

The cipher on the Bingerbrück headstone connected the ancient Panthera tradition of the Rabbinic writings with the first-century Roman Emperor Tiberius. The conclusion drawn is that by reason of her mother's friendship with Emperor Augustus, the teenage Mariamne Herod met Tiberius when he returned to Rome to see his Emperor father early in 9 BC, and her twin sons were conceived by rape or adultery by him at that time. It was possible Mariamne Herod was then married, for the traditions of the time accepted the early marriage of girls. The eldest daughter of Agrippa I, for example, was married at the age of thirteen.⁵⁷

Mariamne Herod named her sons Judas and Yeshu'a and the populace subsequently nicknamed them "ben

Panthera" ("son of Panthera") after their "adulterer" father. The name Yeshu'a came to be pronounced and spoken as "Jesus" in English-language translations, and to avoid confusion shall be used as such throughout this work.

Unravelling the headstone cipher has now completed a full circle, beginning with the illegitimate birth of twin boys to Mariamne Herod, the Virgin Mary of the Gospels, and ending with their father being the thirty-three-year-old Tiberius who became Emperor of Rome in AD 14.

The two boys, although illegitimate by birth, were the legitimate heirs to the throne—the next in line to the imperial purple toga—and that is exactly what the Gospels of the New

Unravelling the headstone cipher has now completed a full circle, beginning with the illegitimate birth of twin boys to Mariamne Herod, the Virgin Mary of the Gospels...



"And do you, Gorppp, promise to love, honour and transmogrify molecularly so long as you both shall live?"

Testament record. This leads to an underlying truth hidden below the surface level of the Gospel story, and is one that the Church has suppressed for 1,700 years.

The Gospel of Mark suggests Judas and Jesus were commonly regarded as illegitimate by the people of their time. The fact that they were each identified as a "son of Mary" (Mark 6:3), not a "son of Joseph", was interpreted by scholars to mean Judas and Jesus were regarded at the time as Mary's illegitimate sons.

In the Gospel of John (8:41), the scribes and Pharisees challenged Jesus about his birth—"We are not born of fornication"—again revealing that the general populace knew that Jesus' birth, and thus Judas', was illegitimate. Related, in Luke 4:22, was Jesus' irritated reaction to the words, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Why would Jesus (or maybe it was Judas speaking) react to this seemingly harmless question? The answer was documented in the oldest Greek texts of the New Testament which read, "not son of Joseph, this one".

The scriptural and historical data being presented in this work show that the New Testament was never an authentic record, but was in its entirety a corpus of corrupted documents specifically constructed to induce a particular belief (John 20:30–31).

This conclusion rests firmly on known facts, and the ensuing chapters analyse ancient Roman, British and Church reports that support this assertion.

THE HIDDEN TWIN

The premise for the conclusion in this work is that the "ben Panthera" twins were of royal birthright and legitimate contenders to the throne of Palestine and the Emperorship of Rome. The Gospel appellations "king of the Jews" and "son of God" were correct titles because of the tradition of the times and the identity of both the mother and father.

The boys were "brought up by Augustus Caesar",⁵⁸ their grandfather, and at least one of the boys publicly called himself the "son of God" and "son of the archangel".⁵⁹ This he could legally do, for he truly was the "son of God" in the Caesar family tradition.⁶⁰

The adopted process for the deification of humans into a god had for centuries remained within the reserve powers of the Roman Emperor. Roman writer Ovidius (43 BC – AD 18) recorded the deification of Julius Caesar (Divus Julius) after his death in 44 BC.

Augustus and others styled themselves "divine *filius*" or "son of a god" and were hailed as "divine emperors" after their deaths.⁶¹ Their offspring were all "sons of a god", and Mariamne Herod's twins were no exception. Her sons actually had an additional advantage, for a similar tradition existed in the Herod family lineage.

The New Testament writers stated King Herod was "a god and not a man" (Acts 12:22), merely because all kings of Judea were called "God" by the people.⁶² There is a solid basis for such an image in the wording of the Gospels and a wealth of narratives exists with which to work.

There are over forty direct references in the New Testament to the twins each being a "son of God" and "born a king" (Matt. 2:2).

Nathanael said to Jesus, for example, "You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49), but there is no record in world history of Jesus ever being a king. Surely King Jesus' existence would have been of immense significance to Israelite history, so why then a blank page? There is an answer.

Thomas the Twin

The life of Mariamne Herod's twin sons provided the essence of the entire Gospel story. To unravel the "king" story of Jesus ben Panthera, it is first important to clarify the Gospel identity of his twin brother, who was called Judas Thomas or Thomas the Twin in the New Testament.

The name Thomas as applied to Judas is a Graecised form of the Aramaic name Toma. In the Gospel of John,⁶³ Thomas was also called Didymus—a translation of Toma, meaning "twin". The Hebrew form of the name, Teom,⁶⁴ corresponds almost exactly to the English colloquial abbreviation, Tom. In an ancient version of the Syrian New Testament, Thomas is actually called Tommy Didymus (twin twin).

In 1945, the Acts of Thomas was discovered in a collection of thirteen old writings, now called the Nag Hammadi Scrolls, and presented Thomas as Judas Thomas—that is, Judas the Twin.

*The eleventh act introduces Thomas' twin, the other Didymus, as an identical twin who is the lord himself.*⁶⁵

The Acts of Thomas has been preserved with some variations in Greek and in Syriac and bearing the unmistakable signs of its Gnostic origin. The general Church belief is that it was written by a Syrian named Bardesanes (154–222).⁶⁶ If the place of its origin was really Edessa, as others for sound reasons supposed,⁶⁷ this would lend considerable probability to the statement explicitly made in the Acts that the relics of the apostle Thomas had come from the East.

In more than one place,⁶⁸ the Acts of Thomas clearly represents Judas Thomas as the twin brother of the one now called Jesus Christ.

In the reconstruction of the two stories provided in this work, the names of

the main Gospel players have been reinstated to what was understood to be their original state of being.

The Acts of Thomas records an incident where Jesus appeared to a young man who "saw the Lord Jesus in the likeness of the apostle Judas Thomas". Jesus then called: "I am not Judas the Twin who is also Thomas; I am his brother..."

Another narrative from the Acts of Thomas included the phrase, "the one who art mother of twin young ones; come, hidden mother".

During the second and third centuries, the Church writings recorded that Judas Thomas was not only Jesus' blood brother but also his identical twin brother, with the identity of their mother suppressed.

In the Book of Thomas, another ancient writing in the Thomas tradition, Judas Thomas is again explicitly called Jesus' "brother" and "double".⁶⁹

The premise for the conclusion in this work is that the "ben Panthera" twins were of royal birthright and legitimate contenders to the throne of Palestine and the Emperorship of Rome.

What A Suppressed Gospel Said

The Acts of Thomas records that the populace "saw as two beings, one single royal token consisting of two halves" (112:80) and "united their adoration of the two persons of Christ". Not surprisingly, this Gospel along with others was suppressed after the first Christian Council at Nicaea in 325.

Again, in the Acts of Thomas, the issue of Judas the Twin was further clarified by a remarkable statement that referred to the "twin brother of Christ, apostle to the most high and fellow initiate into the hidden word of Christ who does receive his secret sayings". The Church claimed that the "secret sayings" in the Gospel of Thomas were collected and recorded by Judas the Twin from words recited to him by Jesus.⁷⁰

In referring to the Acts of Thomas (*Acta Thomae*) and the Gospel of Thomas, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* comments:

*His name [Judas the Twin] is the starting point of a considerable apocryphal literature, and there are also certain historical data which suggest that some of this apocryphal material may contain germs of truth.*⁷¹

The Acts of Thomas "recounts the wanderings and adventures of Didymus Jude Thomas...and his twin brother Jesus"⁷² and makes several references to the twin boys being raised in a palace. The Church attributed these words directly to Judas Thomas:

*When I was an infant too young to talk, in my father's Palace reposing in the wealth and luxury of those who nourished me...*⁷³

In a section of the Acts of Thomas, sometimes called "In the Country of the Indians", the following words of Judas Thomas appear:

*I remembered that I was a son of Royal parents, and my noble birth asserted its nature.*⁷⁴

A fragment of parchment believed also to be from the Acts of Thomas has Jesus saying to Judas Thomas, "Greetings, Twin, my second messiah". This statement supports the reference to two messiahs documented in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, "The Book of the Community Rule".

A crucial fact to be remembered when discussing those "lost" works is that the texts in which Judas Thomas appears as Jesus' twin brother were once accepted works of scripture and widely used by the early presbyters in all Western congregations.⁷⁵

Also to be borne in mind is the fact that the Gospel of Thomas and the Acts of Thomas are from the same era as the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament today. This can only mean that during the establishment years of the Christian texts, the idea of a twin was perfectly acceptable, and with the naivety of the times the birth of identical twins was seen as a miraculous and fascinating event.⁷⁶

Twins in Roman Tradition

The birth of twins was seen by the people of the times as a supernatural occurrence, one of divine origin.

*Once upon a time, in myth, twins signified whatever dualisms a culture entertained: mortal/immortal; good/evil; creation/destruction, what they had.*⁷⁷

A highly respected ancient tradition of the Roman people held that divine twin boys were born to the god Mars and an earthly virgin woman called Ilia. They were Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome, believed by the people to have been sent to Earth as beautiful human beings and reared as infants in the wild by a she-wolf. They were especially honoured in Rome, where they were worshipped as "The Great Twin Brethren to whom all pray". Romulus slew Remus and subsequently ascended into Heaven and joined the gods. Later, a certain Julius Proculus announced that he had seen Romulus alive, who told him that he had become the god Quirinus. Romulus was then deified as Quirinus.

The story of Romulus and Remus became essentially the myth of Rome in the sense that it embodied the high ideals and values to which they referred over the centuries when they wanted to explain to themselves what it was to be Roman. In this way, the stories of Romulus and Remus may have been deliberate creations, but they could be said to have assumed mythical status over years of repetition and reference.

It shall be shown that the stories of the lives of Mariamne Herod's twin boys later became, because of their Roman father and the royal blood of their mother, a rationalisation of the Romulus and Remus story of the twin founders of Rome.

That Emperor Tiberius carried the genes of twins is noted in the writings of the first-century Roman historian Tacitus, who records the birth of twins to Livilla (d. AD 31) and Drusus (d. AD 23), the son of Emperor Tiberius, as "a rare event [that] so delighted the

Emperor that he did not refrain from boasting before the senators".⁷⁸

That Jesus had a twin brother has been debated for centuries. The great Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), in his famous interpretation of the Last Supper, appeared to subscribe to this ancient belief with his depiction of one of the disciples (fifth from Jesus' right). He bears an uncanny resemblance to Jesus, not only in physical appearance but also in the matching design and colour of his clothing, complete to the fine detail of the width and shading of the narrow neckband on his costume.

Michelangelo Reveals a Papal Secret

The supreme sculptor and painter Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) also avidly preserved the "twin boys" theme in dozens of his famous works of Mary. A Catholic theologian, John Eck (1486–1543), argued against persistent rumours which alleged a secret had been confided to both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo by the Borgia pope⁷⁹ and later the de Medici pope, Leo.⁸⁰ Pope Leo X was a "pleasure-loving",⁸¹ self-confessed homosexual and one of his partners was Michelangelo.

At some period in their lives, both Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci lived in luxurious quarters at the Belvedere⁸² on the Vatican Hill and worked on private commissions for both popes. But it was a statement made by Pope Leo X to the Latin Church that strengthened the suspicion that both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were privy to secret information. Pope Leo X frankly declared, "How well we know what a profitable superstition this fable of Christ has been for us".⁸³ Truly remarkable

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words, and if Pope Leo X did pass this "fable" on to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, they may well have preserved the information in their sculptures and paintings.

It seemed strange that both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo constantly portrayed twin boys. The Church reasoned that one of the boys was Jesus Christ and the other John the Baptist. However, these artists clearly created identical twins, and in some cases one appeared slightly unfinished as if to imply that something was being held back. Maybe these men left clues for later generations to unravel.

An Intriguing Little Mystery

The suggestion that Jesus of the Gospels was one of two identical twins was again supported by the discovery of four antique parchments in an old church in the hilltop village of Rennes-le-Château in southern France. There, around 1886, the parish priest Bérenger Saunière uncovered the concealed scrolls while removing the altar stone during restoration. Another discovery of immense importance was also made. While repairing the floor in front of the altar, a flat stone was removed and its underside bore a well-preserved relief of knights on horseback. It is believed to have dated from the time of the building of the church and is known as the *Dalle des Chevaliers*. Saunière used this stone as a step in the garden and it can still be seen in the little museum today.

The scrolls were written in Latin and the first text was a combination of New Testament excerpts from the Gospels of Matthew (12:1–8), Mark (2:23–28) and Luke (6:1–5). All three recorded almost identical information about what was lawful or not lawful to do on the Sabbath. The second scroll provided narratives from the Gospel of John (12:1–11) about the anointing of Jesus Christ. Both writings were said to contain secret, coded messages. The two most valuable parchments were believed to consist of genealogies of Jesus Christ, recorded within a lineage of descent listing the Counts of Rhedae until 1244.⁸⁴ It was said that these parchments were of immense importance and contained "incontrovertible proof" that the Crucifixion was a fraud and Jesus was alive as late as AD 45.

The Church showed immense interest in the scrolls, and it was said Saunière later travelled to Paris and revealed their contents to an unknown party. At the same time, he seemed to have been introduced into esoteric circles and returned to his church with a painting of a mediaeval pope, suspected to have been the aforementioned Pope Leo X.

Shortly thereafter, Saunière began to receive a supply of funds that lasted until his death. He spent huge sums of money, much more than his income as a priest allowed.⁸⁵ Some of it he used to continue the renovation work. Around this time, Saunière and his housekeeper, Marie Dénarnaud, started to dig in a nearby cemetery at night. The local villagers were so concerned, they lodged an official complaint in writing with their mayor.

Saunière destroyed an ancient tomb and defaced its headstone. For nearly one hundred years it had been the last resting place of a certain Marie de Nègre d'Ables, Dame d'Hautpoul. He was searching for something. Some say he was looking for the mortal

remains of Jesus Christ; others say he was searching for one of the many gold hoards said to be hidden in the region and maybe once belonging to the Knights Templar, the Cathars or the Visigoths, who all once occupied the area.⁸⁶

Whatever secret he knew, he seems to have left behind an intricate and elaborate system of clues, including veiled references to Mary Magdalene. He built a luxurious villa named Béthanie and in 1902 started a four-year construction project to build a tower he called Magdala (after Mary of Magdala?). He also had carved an enigmatic bas-relief of Mary of Magdala and an outsized statue of a horned devil (Pan?) supporting the holy-water font. These items are in the church today. For some reason, he chiselled a cross into a stone pillar and then erected it upside down.⁸⁷

For the restored interior of the church, Saunière commissioned the creation of a series of special decorative wall plaques and some painted statues. Each is characterised by some odd but subtle contradiction of the Church presentation of the birth and death

of Jesus Christ. One decoration portrays a body being carried from a tomb in a nighttime scene with a full moon in the background. The fourteen stations of The Way of the Cross are shown in the opposite direction to other churches and one illustration shows the Magdala Tower in the background. Two statues, one each side of the altar, depict Mary and Joseph each holding an identical baby Jesus (twin boys in the Church, as the suppressed Acts of Thomas records). All statues in the church look sadly at the ground, and one of Mary Magdalene has a skull resting at her feet. A curious painting

shows a Scotsman in a kilt watching the Crucifixion.

In 1916, Saunière commenced negotiations over a construction contract worth FF8,000,000, but ill health intervened. Upon his deathbed, Saunière summoned a neighbouring priest and longtime friend to his side. After a brief discussion with Saunière, the priest left the room ashen-faced, "never to smile again". On 22 January 1917, Saunière died unshriven, at his own request, taking with him the secret of the scrolls which made him rich.⁸⁸

Because a number of priests were involved in the suppression of Saunière's scrolls, conspiracy theorists consider a great Church secret has been concealed. But whatever the secret, what was not secret was the Gospel information on this matter. Judas Thomas was somebody's twin, for the Gospel writers recorded "Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin"⁸⁹ and that Jesus Christ had a brother called Judas Thomas.⁹⁰ Put two and two together, and just what other Gospel evidence does the Church need to supply?

Postscript

For those who wish to research this topic further, check out the writings of a close priesthood friend of Saunière, Henri Boudet, edited in 1886. He was an initiate into the secret mysteries and left clues to the Rennes-le-Château secret in the page numbers of a strange book he wrote towards the end of the 19th century, called *La Vraie Langue Celtique et le Cromlech de Rennes-les-Bains* ("The True Language of the Celts and the Cromlech of Rennes-les-Bains").

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Endnotes

39. *The Records of Rome*, 1868, British Library, ILS 7317, "Silvani" (plural).
40. Born in 42 BC, Emperor during the years AD 14–37.
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